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Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Americas and the Caribbean region

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustments in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The MTR and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 2001.

Introduction

1. In 2001, there were two mid-term reviews (MTRs) of UNICEF programmes in the Americas and the Caribbean region, of the Bolivia and the Ecuador programmes of cooperation. In addition to the MTRs, the present report describes two evaluations, both of which assessed the evolution, role and impact of partnerships and alliances in UNICEF programming. However, their scope and focus are very different: while one of them provides a regional perspective for Latin America and the Caribbean, the other focuses specifically on the experience in Guatemala.

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Country mid-term reviews

Ecuador

2. The process leading up to the Ecuador MTR began in mid-2000 with an assessment of the relevance of the new country programme to the economic crisis that has affected the country since 1998. This initial assessment, validated by both UNICEF and its counterparts, concluded that the original conditions and objectives of the 1999-2003 country programme had to be changed in the light of the crisis. A specific recommendation that the 2001 MTR adjust the country programme to respond more appropriately to the crisis was accepted and guided the process to its conclusion in mid-2001.

3. The MTR was conducted in three stages from January to July 2000. The first stage entailed consultations with 300 people in the three most important regions and three largest cities, including public counterparts, civil society leaders and local authorities. The second incorporated the observations of colleagues in other sectors, especially international cooperation. A concluding national consultation with 150 persons, including high-level government authorities, presented the results of the two earlier stages, added new items and approved the final recommendations of the MTR.

4. **The situation of children and women**. As a result of converging factors including the fall in oil earnings, the El Niño natural phenomenon, expenses related to armed conflict and excessive external debt servicing (60 per cent of public spending in 2000), an unprecedented fiscal and economic crisis hit Ecuador in 1998, followed closely by prolonged political crises.

5. The crisis resulted in an economic contraction that has severely hurt children's welfare. In 1999, the school drop-out rate increased, the poorest families reduced their food intake and access to health services was severely curtailed. An additional 3 million persons, including many children, fell below the poverty line. The poverty rate rose from 33 per cent in 1995 to 75 per cent in 1999. Rising unemployment and generalized social stress prompted higher emigration, with both contributing to a separation of families and, in some cases, to the definitive break-up of nuclear families. These and other problems have lasted until the present, even as the political crisis abated and the economic decline halted.

6. **Achievements and constraints**. The original specific objectives of the country programme were, in summary, to: (a) foster a public policy-making consensus based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women; (b) build municipal capacities to apply national policies at the municipal level; (c) establish integrated systems of protection for children and adolescents in pilot municipalities; (d) increase or re-orient resources to help overcome ethnic, gender and geographic-based inequity; and (e) promote social and community participation. With the intensifying crisis, the objectives were re-examined in 2000 and a more precise set was defined, based on the original ones. This refined set of objectives has guided the programme since 2000, was confirmed by the MTR and will continue for the remainder of the programme cycle. They are to: (a) ensure social protection of children with respect to their basic rights to health, education and nutrition; (b) promote and support national efforts in the formulation of economic and social policies oriented towards

guaranteeing universal access to basic social services and improve inequality in income distribution; and (c) stimulate the building of a broad social consensus in order to reduce inequity and exclusion in Ecuador and lead to a society characterized by greater solidarity.

7. Several critical achievements were linked, with each stage building on the former. A key starting point was greater visibility of the social impact of the crisis, which involved design and implementation of tools for monitoring the situation of children and investments in the social sector. Local information systems were implemented in several cantons, and national data and advocacy were conducted to present the global portrait.

8. Based on the institutional visibility and credibility gained in part from the monitoring, UNICEF provided supported the design and implementation of the national Social Emergency Plan. A special focus of this support was promoting initiatives with a strong impact on children, such as single-teacher schools, the application of legislation on free maternity services, food fortification and supplementary food programmes. Technical analysis and advocacy on social spending within the government budget helped to safeguard and improve public investment in social programmes. Ecuador realized a considerable increase in public spending for social programmes during 2000 and 2001. The actions of UNICEF also supported greater transparency in the national budget and in increasing public awareness of public social expenditures.

9. Programming for long-term goals also continued. For example, UNICEF provided technical support for the design of the new Code for Children and Adolescents that was presented to Congress in June 2000 by a broad coalition of organizations. UNICEF also provided support for the establishment of local councils for the integral protection of children's rights in various municipalities.

10. The emergency generated many constraints and the situation of children continues to be affected by wide-ranging poverty, weak government revenues and deteriorated social services.

11. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The critical conclusion of the MTR was that a clear linkage must be established in the minds of all social actors between the situation of children and opportunities for social, economic and political process. Ecuador will build the capacity of its democratic institutions, consolidate economic development and guarantee access to social opportunities to help overcome exclusion and poverty.

12. To reach that goal, the MTR concluded that a strategy focusing on the formulation of innovative models applied on a small scale is incapable of decisively affecting the orientation of economic and social policies and cannot ensure the social inclusion of all children. For this to happen, public investment in basic social services (health, maternal and child health, nutrition and early childhood development) needs to increase substantially.

13. Given that Ecuador's investment in the social sector historically has been relatively low compared to other countries in Latin America, it is necessary to convince a wide array of social actors that more investment is needed. This reinforces the need for heightened intensive advocacy, communication and social mobilization efforts. Different groups in society need to visualize the social exclusion of children as morally unacceptable before proposals to enforce children's

rights are translated into serious and sustainable action. Furthermore, this implies that alliances to define the country's development agenda must extend well beyond such traditional partners as the social sector ministries and reach out to society as a whole.

14. The decreased relevance of small-scale pilot projects does not mean that local, community-based efforts should be reduced. The experience of the country programme to date has shown that vigilance and participation by citizens are essential for the universal enforcement of rights. The councils and committees working at the municipal level, supported by local information systems, have played a key role. Nonetheless, citizens' vigilance efforts are still weak nationwide. Efforts to strengthen citizen participation in the design of public budgets should be supported, in order to guarantee a transparent and effective use of resources earmarked for the social sector.

15. The mix of near- and long-term goals should also continue. The sustainability of the new commitments will best be accomplished through the implementation of the Code for Children and Adolescents complemented by the increased awareness of society to demand that all rights are met. The MTR concluded that the specific goals and general concept of the Global Movement for Children are a suitable framework for generating that demand.

16. **Country programme management plan (CPMP)**. The working team which reviewed the office's managerial structure in the light of the MTR conclusions recommended several changes to the CPMP for the second half of the country programme.

17. Ensuring greater local participation will require more use of local technical assistants. This would also allow the office's central management to focus more on project planning and coordination with the other programmes and sectoral technicians. Meanwhile, the increased activities related to public policies, legal reform and special protection have overburdened existing staff. It was therefore recommended that those areas by reinforced by hiring temporary staff and obtaining technical support in the area of nutrition. In terms of operations and administration, it was concluded that a Publications Assistant is needed to ensure consistency and quality, especially for the advocacy and monitoring materials that circulate widely in the society. A new human resources assistant is also needed to handle the increased workload from temporary staff and consultants. This will be offset by a corresponding staff reduction in another area.

Bolivia

18. The MTR took place from May to October 2001, a year later than planned owing mainly to multiple changes in the leadership of the UNICEF office since 1999. The MTR process also supported the development of the strategy for the next programme of cooperation for 2003-2007, including the country note (E/ICEF/2002/P/L.8), which was presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2002. The MTR covered the country programme and the Bolivian portions of the multi-country Amazon and Andean subregional programmes. A team of UNICEF staff and government representatives oversaw the operation of five thematic working groups analysing the main achievements, obstacles and lessons learned. The thematic groups included experts from public ministries and officials

from other state entities, who reviewed documents and conducted sectoral workshops, leading to a final two-day review which included high-level government officials.

19. **Situation of children and women**. There has been a positive trend in infant mortality; according to data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the infant mortality rate decreased by 12 per cent between 1998 and 2000 and birth attendance by trained personnel rose by more than 50 per cent. Many other indicators continue longer-term trends of slow change and therefore remain major challenges. For example, children and women show unacceptably high rates of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency. Access to safe water and sanitation remain below 40 per cent in the rural areas. Although there has been significant progress in basic education since 1990, with primary school enrolment rates at 87 per cent and no significant differences between boys and girls, only 57 per cent of those entering the first grade complete the fifth year on time.

20. Although Bolivia has seen significant progress in legal reform to eliminate gender discrimination, achievements in favour of other rights have been less spectacular. For example, approximately 500,000 children and adolescents, mainly from rural and indigenous groups, continue to lack birth registration.

21. **Achievements and constraints**. Major achievements of the public policy programme included support for the implementation of the Code for Children and Adolescents through the dissemination and training of the public officials responsible for its enforcement and the creation of over 200 Municipal Offices of Child Rights Defenders. Other successes were the design of the National Plan for the Eradication of Child Labour and, based on the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the creation of an Integral Legal Services and Family Protection Corps and the implementation of a programme to prevent gender violence in schools. Major constraints included the absence of a centralized, coherent body for the protection of child and adolescent rights; the lack of systematic information on children at risk; and the technical and financial weaknesses of the various public offices responsible for the rights of children, adolescents, women and indigenous people.

22. Through the social policy project, UNICEF, along with many other partners, contributed to the preparation of the National Proposal for Poverty Eradication, which is now integrated into the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The MICS, conducted in 2000, supplied important data for a variety of programmatic and advocacy needs.

23. The health project, which serves children under five years of age and pregnant women, was instrumental in universalizing access to the Basic Health Insurance Plan. The Plan has proven to be an important instrument for promoting safe pregnancies and improving breastfeeding practices and infant health conditions. At the local level, the project helped to strengthen health services and reinforce the link between traditional and modern community-based sanitation services and modern. Constraints in the implementation of this project include low usage of the Plan, especially by rural and indigenous populations, principally because of cultural barriers and the low quality of services.

24. The bilingual primary education project supported the production of textbooks in native languages and the strengthening of four indigenous education councils. The major constraints concern coordination between UNICEF and government

counterparts. The informal education and literacy project principally targeted children under six years of age and youth at risk. Its main achievements included the creation of the National Plan for Literacy, which has already helped almost 50,000 people to acquire literacy skills. The beneficiaries, of whom 60 per cent are women, are showing increased self-esteem and greater participation in political, social and community life. The project's constraints include the absence of a national policy for adult education, a lack of systematic information on good practices in literacy projects, insufficient resource materials for Spanish as a second language, incomplete cultural adaptations of educational services and a scholastic calendar that is not adapted to the seasonal rhythm of rural life.

25. Like the Amazon subregional programme, the Andean subregional programme, known as PROANDES, has been adapted to the Bolivian decentralization programme by shifting from service delivery to strengthening the technical and administrative capacities of municipal governments. There were successful pilot interventions in early childhood development (*Wawa Wasi* or "Children's House" and *Kallpa Wawa* or "Learning in the Family"), and on a wider scale in curricula for teaching Spanish as a second language, primary education for adults and innovative practices in water and sanitation which are being considered for replication elsewhere. Among the main difficulties encountered were the limited coverage of the early childhood development project and its lack of institutionalization; weak monitoring of activities; the absence of a strong communication strategy; and weak competencies among counterparts.

26. The Amazon subregional programme has contributed to the design and implementation of public policies on education, health and protection, as well as to the creation and application of poverty reduction plans. UNICEF has played an important role as an impartial actor able to mobilize resources and to coordinate with different organizations to further a common agenda. Other achievements include strengthening the administrative decentralization process, innovative projects in culturally adapted health services, multicultural and bilingual education, literacy skills, environmental protection activities and rapid response to emergencies. Constraints include the lack of institutional capacity of local counterparts, difficult access to remote areas and the dispersion of the population in the Amazon region.

27. The MTR concluded that the objectives of the country programme remain valid and should be maintained. Specific changes resulting from lessons learned are discussed below.

28. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The frequent changes in the UNICEF programme structure over the last years have contributed to an excessive number of dispersed activities and to the duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources. Furthermore, the original, well-structured programme has proven difficult to implement in some cases because of difficulties in coordinating multisectoral programming with strong state sectoral entities. The MTR decided that two of the projects under the public policy programme would be modified in terms of name and scope, and that the six different projects under the municipal development programme would be grouped into two larger projects.

29. The MTR also recommended that greater emphasis be given to social communication for behavioural change (especially at the family and community levels), and female empowerment and gender-related violence as part of a broader

focus on gender equity, indigenous peoples' rights, environmental protection, cultural identity and participation. Because these cross-cutting themes do not fit easily within the sectoral approach, greater efforts are needed to sensitize staff and counterparts in how to integrate them across the entire programme.

30. The country programme has suffered from a weak monitoring and evaluation component, which needs to be corrected, initially by the development of an Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and, if possible, by the creation of a specific post focusing on monitoring and evaluation.

31. As seen in the PROANDES and Amazon programmes, UNICEF cooperation can and should shift from traditional service delivery in order to focus on the creation of local capacities and the strengthening of municipal capacities. This successful strategic transition is a major reason why no major changes are recommended for the two programmes. The broader lesson is that UNICEF cannot replace the State in its responsibility to implement policies and programmes but rather should help to strengthen the State's capacities and create conditions to guarantee the sustainability of achievements.

32. The Government has successfully managed a poverty reduction strategy process and a donor coordination effort that strongly encourages collaboration between donors. It is thus of the utmost importance to strengthen the Common Country Assessment and United National Development Assistance Framework processes within the United Nations family, and to remain a full participant in the wider government-donor councils, especially the New Partnership Framework, within which UNICEF is a member of the working group on equity.

33. **Country programme management plan (CPMP)**. In terms of management, the MTR resulted in increased coordination among different units in the office and a review of the office's internal structure to ensure that it responds to the new programmatic structure. If funds can be located, the monitoring and evaluation function will be strengthened. However, more significant changes, if any, will occur during the finalization of the new programme in early 2002.

Major evaluations

Alliances and partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean countries

34. **Purpose and methodology**. Since the mid-1990s, UNICEF has shifted its programming in the Americas and the Caribbean from a sectoral and needs-oriented perspective towards child rights, with serious implications for programming and the creation of partnerships. Country programmes in the region are now addressing many new thematic areas. At the same time, UNICEF is promoting a more intersectoral and holistic view of the child, requiring ever-widening collaboration with other actors — both governmental and non-governmental — within individual countries and throughout the region as a whole.

35. Collaboration has expanded to include not only "traditional" partnerships with Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other United Nations agencies, but also broader, often innovative links with civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, the media, communities and children and adolescents

themselves. The expanded number of partners and scope of collaboration have obliged UNICEF to make decisions on who its principal partners should be and what type of relationship it should establish with different kinds of organizations and entities.

36. In this context, the purpose of the study was to: (a) lay a foundation for assessing the progress that UNICEF has made in building partnerships and alliances in the region; and (b) provide guidance to country offices in the region on developing more effective strategies for creating partnerships and alliances. The study also provided methodological guidelines for analysing partnerships and alliances in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

37. **Brief summary of methodology used**. The study was led by an international consultant, with assistance from three country-based national consultants. The latter were based in the three countries selected as case studies — Brazil, Guatemala and Jamaica — because of the wealth and diversity of partnerships that UNICEF traditionally has enjoyed there. Alliances in other countries in the region were assessed by the international consultant through review of documents and interviews with technical staff from the Regional Office.

38. The case studies included a thorough review of conceptual definitions; a comprehensive assessment and classification of the range of organizations and entities that are typical UNICEF partners, the types of relationships and agreements that exist and the typical aims of these relationships; and a preliminary assessment of their effectiveness in promoting child and adolescent rights.

39. **Main findings**. The study made several general conclusions that apply to the regional context. Firstly, child rights is a powerful, mobilizing cause which brings people together, even otherwise opposing groups and organizations. Actions for children can also command a certain degree of ethical behaviour from the most unexpected sectors. In this regard, UNICEF stands out from other organizations because of its strong credibility and significant efforts to mobilize different actors and resources in favour of child rights.

40. Secondly, the study emphasized the importance of clarifying roles. UNICEF has performed a myriad of partnership activities, sometimes acting as an intermediary between the Government and civil society, or between donors and implementing partners (local governments, NGOs, private institutions, community groups), among other forms of associations and partnerships. The explosion in terms of the number and diversity of partnership bases has brought about a problem of identity in terms of the UNICEF role in the social development arena.

41. Thirdly, UNICEF has built a strong capacity for articulating or catalysing initiatives originating with numerous actors in the social arena. At the same time, UNICEF offices in Latin America and the Caribbean are pursuing an internal rationalization and introducing more efficient forms of management to coordinate, through specific agreements, otherwise disperse initiatives. However, the challenge to UNICEF is to strengthen the coordination of self-regulated networks to ensure that millions of dispersed initiatives have some systemic coherence.

42. Fourthly, the key remaining challenge is how to reach the poor and the excluded. An important initiative to address this problem is the "map of social exclusion", developed initially for the city of São Paulo, Brazil and currently being

applied to several Brazilian cities. The map is an important step towards greater social transparency, which allows at least a clear view of social problems.

43. Lastly, there is no "silver bullet" to replace sensitivity and a profound knowledge of specific situations, when finding the delicate balance between encouraging partnerships and co-opting the process. Increasingly, UNICEF is acting as a catalyst, drawing on its credibility and the abilities of its staff to monitor, evaluate, document and disseminate the diverse experiences in different countries.

44. **Lessons learned and recommendations**. The three case studies in Guatemala, Jamaica and Brazil were extremely rich in their descriptions of actual developments in terms of alliances and partnerships. The first recommendation, in fact, is that more studies of this type be conducted, since it is through a better understanding of concrete processes that a broader and more realistic vision can emerge.

45. At another level, it is suggested that UNICEF, in partnership with some broader CSOs, invest in developing an interactive information system that would permit a better articulation and self-regulation of the range of actors participating in the process.

46. UNICEF should also invest strongly in partnerships that directly involve children and youth, and conduct good research on how to make this type of initiative public.

47. One of the significant constraints for the development of partnerships is the fragility of the legal framework. Overall, the legal regulation of public and private systems is reasonably sophisticated, but there is an immense legal void regarding NGOs. In particular, there are no legal channels or mechanisms to regulate the collaboration between public and private sectors with NGOs and non-profit organizations. A challenge ahead is to ensure the simplification of the legal framework for initiatives by civil society.

Alliances and partnerships for UNICEF cooperation in Guatemala

48. **Purpose and methodology**. Over the last decade, UNICEF Guatemala has been focusing on the creation of partnerships and alliances for the implementation of its cooperation programme. Its partners and allies have varied over time, according to the shifts in UNICEF priorities, the evolving national context and internal management changes.

49. Within this context, the main objective of this study was to identify, analyse and document the role that UNICEF has played in the creation, facilitation and orientation of alliances and partnerships in Guatemala. The study also analyses how effective these alliances and partnerships have been in furthering children's and adolescents' rights, identifies lessons learned in creating partnerships and makes recommendations for future efforts in this area.

50. This study was part of the a wider regional study described in paragraphs 34-47 above, which also used Brazil and Jamaica as case studies. The Guatemalan study entailed a thorough review of the diverse kinds of alliances and partnerships that UNICEF has held over the last five years in the country, especially in the areas of food fortification to combat micronutrient deficiency and the approval of the Children's and Adolescents' Code.

51. **Main findings**. One of the study's principal findings is that for a partnership to succeed, it is of outmost importance that UNICEF and the potential partner have convergent interests and share a common agenda.

52. The strategy for creating partnerships and alliances in Guatemala has undergone important changes. The role of UNICEF has shifted from provision of direct technical assistance through projects focused on the promotion of specific rights, to offering wider support in the consolidation of social processes aimed at strengthening the economic, political, social and cultural rights of children and women. At present, UNICEF works with a diverse group of allies with whom it shares and mutually reinforces common interests related to child rights.

53. Despite the fact that UNICEF has enjoyed notable results in the creation of alliances, additional efforts are needed to expand further the rights-based approach to programming and promote the full participation of children and adolescents in initiatives that benefit them.

54. The dimensions of partnerships which were studied — alliances for food fortification and approval of the Code for Children and Adolescents — have shown that UNICEF interacts with many different actors, regardless of their ideological or political philosophy. This has yielded very positive results and has increased the credibility of UNICEF. Although the Code does not yet have final legislative approval, there is now almost universal awareness of children's rights and the importance of the Code in Guatemala. UNICEF has played an important facilitating role in both initiatives under study, and evidence shows that because of its strong credibility, it is capable of bringing together diverse actors with opposing ideologies to work jointly in favour of a common goal.

55. The creation of strategic alliances to strengthen and promote local capacities and social oversight are still pending and should be seen as priority tasks for UNICEF. Developing the internal capacity of UNICEF to measure the impact of its interventions is a serious challenge. While there is a lot to say regarding process in the formation of specific alliances, more results-based evaluations are required to measure concrete outcomes.

56. **Lessons learned and recommendations**. This study has demonstrated that in spite of Guatemala's long armed conflict, it still has been possible to build bridges between different actors and institutions, allowing them to participate in the search for solutions to violations of children's rights. These alliances have made a significant contribution towards the fulfilment of child rights.

57. The work of UNICEF to increase awareness among policy makers of child rights issues and advocate on their behalf, demands high-quality technical expertise and advisory capacities. However, UNICEF must go beyond producing documents and focus on developing concrete proposals whose level of effectiveness has been tested and guaranteed. This was demonstrated in several projects such as "Water as a Source of Peace", the bilingual education programme and the food fortification programme, among others.

58. The study also demonstrated that UNICEF achieves the greatest impact when it works with partners and allies, rather than working alone. However, even within the UNICEF office, collaboration between colleagues working in different areas is still in an early stage, so increased communication and cooperation between different units within the country office is the first challenge that needs to be addressed.

59. UNICEF enjoys great credibility in both governmental and non-governmental spheres, as well as in Guatemala's private sector. Taking advantage of this strategic position to open spaces for dialogue between sectors would greatly assist the process of reconstruction of the Guatemalan social fabric. Likewise, UNICEF could play an important role in developing local capacities for political influence in the management of public national budgets.

60. The preparation of diverse documents that systematize, analyse and compile the lessons learned regarding the successful and unsuccessful alliances in which UNICEF has participated is of fundamental importance.

61. It is urgent that UNICEF identify strategies for internal training to provide staff with a stronger basis for political and trend analyses for timely decision-making and formation of alliances.

62. Any UNICEF action must take into account the complex socio-cultural structures of the country. The recommendations regarding greater articulation with civil society, possession of a wider agenda with regard to public policy and greater participation in the issue of multi-culturalism are fundamental. The development of strategies for the formation of partnerships and alliances is and will be crucial for UNICEF in contributing to strengthening civil society in the face of the weakness of political structures.